

(Continued from sermon 15)

I also know people who claim to be followers of Christ that simply ignore such passages because they do not like that part of God's nature. Well, if you feel that way for any reason, you have not been listening, and the most probable reason you have not been listening is that this kind of talk about God caused you to tune out early in the reading. Now if you want to understand the truth about God, listen up!

God is not weak, He is tender. He is not angry, He is kind, even in His justice. Especially in His justice. Actually, my heart sings that the justice of God is beyond our understanding. Where would any of us be if God were a just God, as we understand and mete out justice? If I depended upon His justice, as I know justice, I'd be cast into outer darkness forever. But, ... God is love, God is love.¹

You cannot go anywhere in the Bible and find anything that proves God is cruel and takes some kind of pleasure in punishing and killing people. Anyone who believes that simply has little or no knowledge of the Bible. In actuality they are also revealing that they are not willing to accept God for Who He is if He does not match up to be what they want Him to be. Yes, God will punish people severely if their disobedience continues over a long period of time, and depending on what the severity of the sin includes. If you jaywalk everyday on the way to the train station right in front of the sign that says, "NO JAYWALKING," your punishment is not going to be the same as someone who rapes and murders women in front of the same sign every day.

Now the issue here is not cruelty, as is actually found in most other religions, but **justice**. God is a perfectly **just and patient** God. He always gives His children the rules upfront and He seems also to be abundantly patient with them before He even begins to initiate punishment in order to let them know what is coming if they do not pay attention to the warning. He showed patience to Israel for hundreds of years before unloading the severest of punishments on them by the **exile to Babylon** (586 B.C.). Then after a remnant returned from Babylon, for hundreds of more years before He allowed the total destruction of Judah and Jerusalem in A.D. 70. From that date until A.D. 1948 (following World War II), the Jews were exiled from the land God had given them in approximately 1400 B.C.

That is not cruelty on the part of God, but rather it is **perfect Justice**. If you have children, and have been a good parent, you know the necessity of having the punishment equivalent to the crime. If their offenses are minor, a verbal warning is appropriate, and occasionally works. If they do it again, another verbal warning is issued, which occasionally works. The third offense for the same thing they have been previously issued two warnings for, would suggest temporary removal of privileges for a short period of time, which occasionally works. The fourth offense for my children would require some form of fear by a very stern warning clearly outlining the physical form of abuse that would occur immediately upon a fifth offense. I admittedly have much less patience than God. I would also produce the weapon I would use to administer the punishment which was a very large paddle.

¹ ¹(Omaha, Nebraska: Christianity Today, 1997), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Justice".

I'm very happy that I never had to use the paddle, although on occasion they came close. Sometimes I would get the paddle out and begin tapping it on my hand, and that often sent a loud and clear message. I am quite sure they believed I would use it if they did not immediately cease and desist (stop). I believe my children had enough fear of me to recognize I would only tolerate so much.

Was I a good parent? I Probably will not know the answer to that until I stand before Jesus in Heaven. But I do know that I loved my children very much and would have done anything I believed was for their good, or suffered anything for their well-being. So I believe I can at least understand God's love for His children, and that includes you.

He loves us so much that He wants to give us everything that is good. He wanted that for all mankind from the very beginning, and how did mankind express thanks and appreciation for these incredible promises? *"Thanks God, but no thanks, we would rather do it our way!"*

"An interesting story is shared in First Samuel, 1 Samuel 30, concerning faithfulness. King David and his men were away at battle and while away their foes came in and laid the city of Ziklag in ashes, carrying away the wives and sons and daughters of the absent soldiers. When the men returned they were overwhelmed with grief. The scripture says they "lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep." They began to blame David. Then David selected 600 men and set out to rescue the captives. When they came to the brook Besor, 200 were so faint they could not cross over the brook. "Very well," said David. "You two hundred stay here and mind the baggage and the others of us who are stronger will go on." They went on, made a great recovery, and returned with the spoil. When they returned to the brook Besor a protest arose on the part of those who went to battle. They did not want to share the spoil. Then it was that David made a great statement about faithfulness: "As his part is that goeth down to the battle so shall his part be that tarried by the stuff. They shall part alike." What David said was that not are all equally strong yet all can be equally faithful. The 200 that did the best they could were just as worthy of the reward."²

God is a perfect judge issuing **perfect justice**.

Fools? Dummies? Morons? Nincompoops? Boneheads? Airheads? The truth be told, they are just all sinners! It started with Adam and Eve committing the first sin by disobeying God's one command, and the sin nature that they allowed into the world by following Satan has been part of every human born upon this earth. So are you bad because you have a sin nature that can repeatedly cause you to disappoint God several times a day. No you are a child of God who is tempted by Satan to deceive you into believing what is not good for you is good for you. When you give in to that temptation you are a child of God who acts as if they don't know they're a child of God. All you know is that your nature tells you that it would be a kick to do these things, but when you do them the actual feeling you get is more like a kick in the head.

² Ibid., Under: "Justice".

So when this sin on the part of Adam and Eve was exposed, God did not destroy Adam and Eve, but punished them by removing them from the Garden of Eden and exposing them to hard work, suffering, and all those things that exist outside of God's presence. That condition has now existed for thousands of years. He also gave them the **hope of a Savior** who will come and pay the penalty for their sins, **a perfect blood sacrifice** by One who never sinned, which would be Jesus Christ, who would come to earth as fully God and fully man. You need not try to understand that because it is beyond anybody's capacity to understand. It was simply necessary for the perfect blood sacrifice to be a human being without sin, and only God could provide such a human (everyone else had some history of sin).

Because of His love for us, God decided to become a man in the flesh and come to earth as one of us, and be willing to suffer and die for us, so that the penalty for our sin would be paid for. He was willing to suffer and die for us, and then rise from the grave overcoming death so that we would have the opportunity to do the same, and when that day comes receive new and perfect bodies which will last forever in eternity. Does that sound like the promise of a cruel God?

One final thought before moving on. God does not want to stand in the way of your happiness. He wants you to enjoy every aspect of life, so He tells you how to have that in the Bible. You might call it, *"God's How To Book For Success."* All you have to do is follow His rules and you will be happy and at peace. Now that does not mean that you will not experience hard times and suffering, but you will be able to find peace in the middle of the storm.

You are the one who is standing in the way of your happiness if you have been ignoring the One and only God. If you have been trying to make yourself and others believe you are a good person, that is a clear indicator that you are on the wrong path, Those who live by God's rules do not have to try and prove they are a good person to anyone, including themselves. Being good just happens when you live a Godly life, and that godness radiates as a genuine goodness to all those around you.

You would not want a God who was not perfectly just while at the same time filled with grace and mercy. Just imagine getting to Heaven and finding that things are just the same there as they are down here. That would not be good. But for anyone who has a basic intelligence there should be plenty of motivation to go to Heaven where everything will be perfect and you will find enjoyment in everything you do. And you rule with Jesus, perhaps doing something you always wanted to do but never got the opportunity. I like to think perhaps I will be a wonderful preacher the likes of Charles Spurgeon or D.L. Moody.

Compare that to the alternative of Hell, where the level of suffering will be a miserable experience 24/7. Because if you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, that is where the Bible tells us we will end up. Please give this some serious thought and if you are not yet assured as to where you are headed, we are available at all times to assist you in getting to the right destination.

5. The covenant with all repenting sinners to save them through Christ.

This covenant is **unconditional** (God alone will provide salvation for all who want it).

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (TLB):

³¹ "The day will come," says the Lord, "when I will make a new contract with the people of Israel and Judah.

³² *It won't be like the one I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a contract they broke, forcing me to reject them," says the Lord.*

³³ *"But this is the new contract I will make with them: I will inscribe my laws upon their hearts, so that they shall want to honor me; then they shall truly be my people and I will be their God.*

³⁴ *At that time it will no longer be necessary to admonish one another to know the Lord. For everyone, both great and small, shall really know me then," says the Lord, "and I will forgive and forget their sins.*

Titus 1:1-2 (HCSB):

¹ *Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to build up the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness,*

² *in the hope of **eternal life that God**, who cannot lie, **promised** before time began.*

Hebrews 13:20-21 (HCSB):

²⁰ *Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep—with **the blood of the everlasting covenant**,*

²¹ *equip you with all that is good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. Glory [belongs] to Him forever and ever. Amen.*

Philippians 2:13 (NLT):

¹³ *For God is working in you, **giving you the desire** and the power to do what pleases him.*

Jeremiah first speaks of a **new covenant** in his prophecy of a great work of salvation which God would perform sometime in the future. Jeremiah's **new covenant prophecy** has similarities to other prophecies in Scripture that predict the fulfillment of God's promises of a perfect world ruled by Jesus where there will be no sin and continual peace and joy.³ The term is found six times in the NT (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8; 9:15; 12:24; Luke 22:20). The suggestion of a new covenant can also be found in Romans 11:27; Galatians 4:21-31. In 2 Corinthians 3:4-18 the New Covenant is compared with the old covenant in the framework of Paul comparing his ministry with the ministry of Moses.

³ Isa. 11:6-9; 54:11-15; 59:20-21; Jer. 32:36-41; 33:14-26; Ezek. 16:59-63.

The new covenant fulfills the promises of the old covenant and provides an explanation of Christ and redemption (salvation and rescue from punishment for our sin), providing the Holy Spirit to come live within us, and by the one on one relationship believers are now allowed to have with God and Jesus.

In Jeremiah and the New Testament the term "*new covenant*" is interchangeable with the Gospel of Jesus and the presentation of an understanding of redemption. The new covenant is a direct reflection of God's grace and mercy.

6. The Covenant with David

2 Chronicles 13:4-5 (TLB):

⁴ *When the army of Judah arrived at Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, King Abijah shouted to King Jeroboam and the Israeli army:*

⁵ *"Listen! Don't you realize that **the Lord God of Israel swore that David's descendants would always be the kings of Israel?***

2 Samuel 7:8-16 (TLB):

⁸ *"Now go and give this message to David from the Lord of heaven: 'I chose you to be the leader of my people Israel when you were a mere shepherd, tending your sheep in the pastureland.*

⁹ *I have been with you wherever you have gone and have destroyed your enemies. And I will make your name greater yet, so that you will be one of the most famous men in the world!*

¹⁰ *I have selected a homeland for my people from which they will never have to move.*

¹¹ *It will be their own land where the heathen nations won't bother them as they did when the judges ruled my people. There will be no more wars against you; and your descendants shall rule this land for generations to come!*

¹² *For when you die, I will put one of your sons upon your throne, and I will make his kingdom strong.*

¹³ *He is the one who shall build me a temple. And **I will continue his kingdom into eternity.***

¹⁴ *I will be his father and he shall be my son. If he sins, I will use other nations to punish him,*

¹⁵ *but my love and kindness shall not leave him as I took it from Saul, your predecessor.*

¹⁶ ***Your family shall rule my kingdom forever.'**"*

God guaranteed David that his descendants would rule in Israel forever. It will be the home God promised the Jews under Moses where there will be a lasting peace, joy, and plenty. This nation will be ruled by Israel's Messiah, Jesus, who is a direct descendant of the line of David.